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CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP AND HONEST LEGISLATION.

A

# SERMON

DELIVERED BEFORE

HIS EXCELLENCY

## HENRY J. GARDNER,

HIS HONOR

## HENRY W. BENCHLEY,

THE HONORABLE COUNCIL,

AND THE

LEGISLATURE OF MASSACHUSETTS,

AT THE

ANNUAL ELECTION,

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 6, 1858.

BY F. D. HUNTINGTON, D. D.,

PREACHER TO THE UNIVERSITY AT CAMBRIDGE.

BOSTON:

WILLIAM WHITE, PRINTER TO THE STATE.

1858.

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## Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, Jan. 12, 1858.

ORDERED, That four thousand copies of the Election Sermon, delivered by Rev. F. D. HUNTINGTON, D. D., before the Executive and the two Branches of the Legislature, be printed for the use of the Legislature.

WILLIAM STOWE, *Clerk.*

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That part of the Sermon, included under the second head, was not spoken at the delivery.

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# SERMON.

LUKE VII. 5.

For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.

THE two thoughts are joined, not accidentally, not artificially, but by a natural law. In the habit of the Hebrew mind, which was speaking,—in the character of the public-spirited officer for whom that praise and that plea were spoken,—those ideas lived harmoniously together, a bond of organic unity between them, and each more vital for the other. By the march you have just made from the State House to this sanctuary, you have given another deliberate confession, and offered one more public symbol, that they were both true, and that their mutual relation is a truth also. The love of country and reverence for God: their conjunction here was no rhetorical device, nor local Judaistic sentiment, but a permanent, philosophical, unchangeable reality. It was not a fact then for the first time, or the last. No matter though the centurion was a citizen only by adoption. The association was just

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as vivid, for that, between the people's good and the worship of the Most High. It is not the rule, but it happens,—it happened then,—that the foreigner, by the very freshness with which the genius of an advanced economy salutes him, and by its contrast with oppressive institutions that he has outgrown, enters farther into its real meaning than the sluggish and sordid native. Probably the centurion was more profoundly imbued with the central life of the Hebrew system than many of the straitest of the Pharisees. It seems he was discontented with Paganism, and found his aspirations encouraged and his affections attracted, by the sublime monotheism of Moses; it seems he loved a slave, and was so catholic as to bestow his liberality on a nation of which he was not born; it seems he was so modest and reverent as to shrink from letting the Lord of life come under his roof. These are not slight nor provincial virtues, in any age or land, certainly not too common in our own. Nor ought it to surprise us to find, in a nature so lofty and comprehensive, a practical faith that patriotism and religion,—the State House and the synagogue,—belong together.

We can go farther yet. Down at their lowest roots and life-springs, these principles not only interlock, but become essentially one and the same. Patriotism, that is, when it *is* a principle, and not a mere blind instinct of the blood, is an outgrowth and a part of the faith and honor of the Almighty. Analyze it, and you will see it so. For patriotism is only disinterested

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devotion to the justice, the power, the protection, the right, embodied, after a certain fashion and degree, in the State and its subjects. It is not attachment to the parchment of a constitution, to the letter of an instrument, to the visible insignia of authority, to a strip of painted cloth at a mast-head, to a mass of legal precedents and traditions, nor always to the person of the sovereign. It is not a personal interest in the people of the nation, for the most of one's fellow-citizens are unknown, and the few that are met may awaken no special regard. Instituted ideas,—as justice, power, protection,—organized into a national government, and lifted up for the defence of the country, are what inspire an intelligent loyalty, and the same ideas have their perfect embodiment in the person of God. On the other hand, religion, veneration for the Creator, involves a consistent regard for the welfare of great bodies of his family. By the laws of the human nature he has fashioned, this will mount to enthusiasm, as our relations to any one body grow intimate, or look back to an antiquity, or own a history of common sufferings. Less elevated elements may intermix. But whichever you take first,—the feeling for the State, or for the God of States,—the other clings to it, and comes logically with it.

So the State, through you, its temporary representatives and civil ministers, bends here to-day before the Ruler of rulers. Legislation comes to the Church, not primarily to hear a sermon from a man, but to

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adore the Supreme Lawgiver, and to supplicate light. Our Fathers, best builders of empire, on the whole, that the world has seen since the Great Emancipator of Israel compacted a Commonwealth of fugitives, of which Jehovah was the head,—our Fathers, taking *that* for their model, when they ordained this ceremony of election worship, believed in it. With them the ceremony was a faith. If it ever sinks into a mere routine,—the ghastly effigy of a departed sincerity,—it will be because some generation has not honesty and courage to drop the form with the life, but is willing to keep credit with superstition by continuing, for considerations of policy, a sanctimonious pageant out of which the soul has ebbed away. For, saying nothing either of religion or of patriotism, it is only when man is emptied of his manliness, that he consents to go through a solemn performance that is emptied of its heart. And, let it be added just here, when there are cant and make-believe at Church, it will not be strange if presently there are fraud and falsehood at the State House; for it can scarcely be expected with reason that men who undertake a deception on the Omniscient, and act a part before themselves, will be restrained from overreaching one another, and cheating the people.

I have no occasion, therefore, to wander far for my subject. It lies before me in your coming here, and we are shut up to it. I have to speak first of the personal character of a Christian Citizen, and then of the honest Legislator; and since it is the blessing of

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our system that citizen and legislator are united in one,—our rulers, as the Prophet put it, being of ourselves, and our governors proceeding from the midst of us,—the one of these topics will pass, by a natural transition and progress, into the other.

I. Nor need I detain you with much amplification on the propensity in all partially Christianized states of society to separate what are here joined,—to divorce public affairs, that is, from the control of the Gospel, and so to unchristianize government. Such a tendency may be briefly disposed of, I think, in this way. If it will stand out in the light and defend itself,—and not merely creep under the poor shelter of an unthinking timidity, or an irrational selfishness,—it must pursue one of three lines of argument; for there is no fourth for it. It must maintain either, 1. That religion is *inferior* to politics, as an interest of humanity,—which would be virtual atheism,—a denial of God, as God, supreme; or, 2. It must maintain that religion and politics are naturally hostile to one another, the admission of religious obligation damaging political success,—which is practical infidelity, i. e. a denial of the absolute character which religion takes in the teaching of Christianity; or else, 3. It must maintain that while both are legitimate ideas, and capable of being represented by legitimate institutions, their provinces are distinct, and their objects best achieved by keeping them apart; which, so far as it is



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not atheistic and infidel both, is simply absurd; because it amounts to saying that a man, or a community of men, can have such a thing as a Christian character separate from those vital social relations, and those duties of life by which the character is made up. So much of attempts to wrench asunder what the Divine constitution of things has married into one, and what, as I said, *were* one in the centurion of the text, as in every Christian citizen.

But what is more deserving of your careful notice, because a truth apt to be disguised by subtler kinds of sophistry, is, that every such attempt, whether open or occult, ends practically in the first of the three errors just supposed,—i. e. in *subordinating* the claims of religion to the claims of politics,—which then instantly become by that act, false and vicious politics. When a people begin to dissever their obligations as Christians from their obligations as citizens, it is never long before the first class of obligations become secondary, and they are ready to break the laws of God, in managing the machinery that dispenses the offices and patronage of the State. God and Mammon never become co-ordinate powers, nor even enter into treaty; and as soon as any department of life, like political action, bereaves itself of religious guidance, it becomes at once unmitigated mammon. If they divide, religion sinks into a mere client. Because, there are always commercial advantages which Government is able to multiply, and material interests which it can secure—

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trade, custom-houses, corporations, post-offices, public works, legal protection to property,—and these will be had *at any rate*, by men who are willing to turn religion into a corner, or lock it up in a meeting-house.

In such a sense as this, the subjection of the Church to the State is a mischief of much larger extent than the theory technically known by that name. In the time of the civil wars in England, the doctrine took a specific shape, and, reaching out from its Germanic origin, formed a British sect that made it known to history. But there is a *virtual* Erastianism, where there is no church establishment, and no crown to wrangle for its patronage. Let the Church represent the Christianized life, power and principles of a people; and let the State represent those regulations that provide for the external welfare of society,—which was Mr. Webster's definition,—and there has been no age when the State has not aggressed upon the Church. For there has been no age when men's outward comfort has not seduced their conscience; no country where grasping passions have not made war upon righteousness; no people in the whole period since the office-seeking sons of Zebedee applied for places at the right hand and left of the expected Prince, down to the city of Washington as it has looked since the first of December, in which multitudes have not been more willing to attest their affection for their nation by accepting its emoluments, than, like the centurion, by building its synagogues.

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And yet, my friends, what warrant is afforded, either by experience, or by the word of Heaven, or by the nature of things, for supposing that national safety is compatible with any less strictness of moral life than individual safety is? or that those retributive rules of God, which require the loss of power as a penalty for the abuse of privilege, which drag every secret abomination to judgment, linking sin to damnation, will be somehow evaded by *masses* of men, while they hold for men one by one? as if God's hand were too unskilful to feel through the intricacies of a crowd, or his eye so infirm as to be bewildered by the pompous iniquity of office! Whenever America shall be thoroughly committed to a line of policy that rejects those officers which are peace and those exactors which are righteousness; whenever it shall resign the election of its law-makers and rulers into the hands of cunning cabals, to the chicane of talkative persons whose only principle of suffrage is a determination to put certain labelled candidates in, right or wrong, and to keep certain proscribed candidates out, wrong or right,—so giving over its Capitol and Cabinet to brawling tongues and embezzling fingers; whenever it shall consent to seat on the high Bench of Justice political debaters instead of Judges of the Law, and to take from that Bench sophistries and special pleas of partisan self-interest instead of impartial interpretations of the Constitution,—whenever it lifts to power those who care more for the world's applause and money, than

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for God's worship, so violating the *condition* given in the text, then, infallibly shall the warning also of the context be fulfilled. They shall come from the East and the West, and God shall take away the kingdom from you, and give it to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

God knows who can be trusted. Bad governments seem to succeed for a while; but their fame only lifts them up into a more conspicuous post, that the mockery of their coronation may be more widely instructive. For the permanence of power, there needs a select sacramental band, and enough to control the community, of brave-hearted, God-fearing, consecrated men—needs these more than the amplest revenue, the most splendidly appointed navy, the mightiest fortifications, or the loftiest roofed arsenals. If "saints" meant, as it ought to mean, men of manly righteousness, and not men of cunning or cruel piety, we might all join the Fifth Monarchists, and pray for "the reign of God's people." The best system of national defence is the organization of character. No State House presents a venerable front, after it becomes a nest of unclean birds,—demagogues who have bartered their principles to get there, or carried them there for a market. If Congress is to be the country's council,—or indeed if it is to leave any country long to be counselled for,—you must stock it with hearts whose faith is vital, and not traditional, in the justice of Almighty God. No judiciary can decree law or equity from a

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durable bench, if the men that sit there, however learned or large of brain, have forgotten that they are themselves forever on trial at the great assize of eternity. It is little that the members of a cabinet talk in twenty tongues, or issue diplomatic papers that rouse domestic pride and foreign jealousy, if they never speak the one simple language of child-like hearts to the Father of Truth, with whom lies are abominations. And what is spiritual law for the president and his secretaries, for judges and legislators, is law for the humblest of the subjects. It will be seen yet, truly as the maxims of passing dynasties and parties must be adjourned for the ideas of the New Testament, that every faithful disciple, standing in his lot for the command to love God and man, is a better patriot than the statesman who seeks every kind of honor but that which comes from on high. For the *statesman* ought also, and first, to be *Christ's man;* patriotism without Christianity is not a strong sentiment; he who has resolved to stand on the side of God, is the best friend of his country that any country can have; and there is no earthly country good enough to be loved safely, except the love of it be hallowed by faith in a better country, even an heavenly.

In this spiritual sense, not by an ecclesiastical or prelatical control, the State is really but a dependent on the society of Christ. Instead of the church being a subaltern to the government, government is ancillary

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to the church. The church is the religion of Jesus organized, of whatever sect, and of all sects where faith in Jesus is, going forth to redeem and bless humanity with the heavenly doctrines of freedom, equality, holiness and love. Has the civil State any higher function than that? Has any empire so exalted a sovereign? So far the theocratic idea is just, that every nation should have God for its acknowledged ruler, and make every custom and institution in it loyal to that heavenly supremacy. I can imagine no loftier conception of human society than that. Every avenue of the national life should be a channel for the free course of the divine spirit, every legislature a school of practical theology, every court house a solemn vindicator of the oppressed, and every city, village, and home, a nursery of strong and beautiful souls.

II. Christian citizenship, then, is the true foundation of national greatness. But who are Christian citizens? Something more definite and determined than mere men of compliance with the conventional decencies of civilization—not mere "barbarians in broadcloth."

Something more is necessary to being the citizen of a Christian State than barely living in it. Because I tread under my feet, as I go about my private business, a certain soil which has been marked off by surveyors, and called by the geographic name of Massachusetts, and because I avail myself of its various local

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provisions for the more advantageous pursuit of certain selfish ends, do I therefore deserve to be recognized as one of the State's proper citizens? In matter, mere physical presence constitutes a claim to be called by a local name. Holyoke, whatever the character of the prospect from it, is a Massachusetts mountain; and Cochituate, whether its waters be pure or foul, is a Massachusetts lake,—as a quantity of building materials fashioned into a dwelling within the limits of this city makes a Boston house. So, for the mere purposes of a census, or for the assessment of a capitation-tax, or for convenience of description, it may be said of a person that he is a Massachusetts man, irrespective of his convictions, or his character, his loyalty, or his treachery. But you will see that the moment you take up such a designation for thoughtful reflection, or a sober analysis, you must make it cover something besides the bare fact of inhabiting. You can apply the term citizenship, then, only to such as possess a certain Massachusetts spirit, and are morally assimilated to the genius of the State's institutions.

We shall begin at a safe point if we say that the first qualification consists in *an intelligent understanding of the principles which the government organizes, and of the ideas which it represents.* Every political institution is the visible exponent of an invisible thought. Every charter, compact, bill of rights, written law-book, or established custom of civil administration, is an attempt to realize in practice some idea in

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the governing mind. If that governing mind is an autocrat, or even monarch, you will have embodied the idea of irresponsible dominion, or pure despotism, like the old eastern tyrannies, or like modern Russia, where only the smallest check is imposed by the prerogative of the nobles. If it is a landed aristocracy, of caste, conquest, or hereditary rank, you will have Feudalism, as in the middle ages. If it is a combination of royal prerogative and popular will, you have a limited monarchy, with parliament and crown, as in Great Britain. If it is a majority of the people, you have a limited democracy, as with ourselves. Sometimes this central and radical idea of the Government is formally set forth in a Declaration, as with a Constitutional Power like the United States. Sometimes it is expressed only in the aggregate of usages, precedents and maxims, of an empire, or of some petty court or chieftain's castle. But whether its utterance be direct or indirect, in words or practices, it does somehow get uttered, and by its consequences it is felt. The business of an historical student is not merely to learn the outward succession of events, the sayings and doings of the several kingdoms, but it is to comprehend those hidden principles lying below the surface like seeds under the ground, out of which empires and their epochs have germinated, and sprung up, opening their beneficent or baleful foliage, bearing their nutritious or poisonous fruit.

So also of the present. It is one thing to go through



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the mechanical functions of voting for law-makers year by year, or obeying laws after they are made, and quite another to enter into an intelligent apprehension of the great thoughts which lived in the minds of the men by whom the whole structure of the Government was founded, and which still live in the heart of the Government itself. It is this last which every man ought to have attained before he is worthy to be regarded as, in any lofty acceptation, a citizen.

Libanius, quoted by Montesquieu, says, that at Athens a stranger who intermeddled with the assemblies of the People was punished with death. If this was summary and cruel, it proved the sanctity attached to political action,—the faith that a distinctive civil education was indispensable to it,—that the popular sources of power should be kept pure, and thus attested the reality of the democratic profession. An illegal vote was usurpation, and ignorance was a milder form of rebellion.

I am not referring here to the advantages of a general education. I accord, of course, heartily with all that can be argued in behalf of that. There can be no right citizenship at this day without intellectual activity. But over and beyond this I insist on the importance of a special branch of science,—of a better understanding of the fundamental principles which underlie and animate our political system. Proudly as we boast of our promiscuous cultivation, I believe that we are in great danger of national damage from

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indifference just at that point. We take too much for granted. We are driven to the ballot-box once a year in gangs, by little knots of self-constituted leaders in caucuses, who mean, by indirect process, to dictate the votes and take the offices. Or else we follow some party champion, who, let him know never so much, is certainly not endowed with a vicarious knowledge that shall atone for our ignorance, and who may possibly, on the very theatre where he has gained his experience and his eloquence, have encountered temptations, too strong to be resisted, to imbibe the duplicity and the trickery of a demagogue.

I would have every child, therefore, carefully and conscientiously taught those distinctive ideas which constitute the substance of our Constitution, and which determine the policy of our politics. He should know wherein his own government differs from other governments. He should be able, on his own information, and not depending on any interested meddler, to tell when there is a departure from the true course, where an abuse begins, and where a peril threatens. And to this end, there ought forthwith to be introduced into our common schools a simple, comprehensive manual, adapted to juvenile minds and to the whole country, whereby the needed tuition should be planted at that early period. It is absurd that our pupils should go on, through the whole term of their preparation for life, committing the rules of a grammar, the facts of geography, and the calculations of

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arithmetic, to the total neglect of the principles of the legislation under which they are to live, of the facts of the country to which they belong, and of the constitution of their liberties. It may be the low instinct of a money-making age to desire only a knowledge how to reckon profit and loss. But will it not be at least as sensible, and far more patriotic, to covet an acquaintance with those grand laws of social order and protection under which all our traffic is prosecuted, by which all our prosperity is shielded, and which alone can make any successful or honorable enterprise possible?

Among us, a neglect of this sort of culture is without excuse. It is made so equally by the freedom of opportunity, guarantied by all the arrangements of our educational apparatus, and by the simplicity of the government itself, which is to be studied. An Austrian peasant, a Russian serf, Italian lazzaroni, have a plausible apology for being in the dark respecting the laws they live under, for the laws themselves are kept in the dark; and then the subject is held *so far* under them, that he cannot lift himself up to look at them. In some of these cases, no school-house door stands open to him; a stifled press defrauds him, or a mercenary one hoodwinks him; an "*Index Expurgatorius*" screens from him what he most wants to know, and tyranny silences the instruction which he has the best right to hear. To say that it is otherwise with us, is only to repeat the common-place of two hundred and twenty-seven election sermons. Yet professional

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and trading politicians, for purposes of their own, have the effrontery to tell us that nobody is fit to legislate, nor to form parties, nor to discourse on public matters, but those who, like themselves, hold a professional key to the secret. Doubtless, if legislation consists in making the many the tools of promoting a few, if drilling parties is tantamount to framing a conspiracy of plunder, and if discoursing on public matters is the art of compounding falsehood, detraction and insolence, then doubtless they may be left to enjoy a monopoly of political science. Such characters flourish among us,—just as the rankest weeds grow in the fattest soil,—for the very reason that our admirable system of government is so well able to go alone, that the consequences of individual apathy are slow to appear. But those consequences will not be postponed forever; the everlasting laws of national retribution are not to be defeated; ignorance and carelessness are seeds that will yield their harvest of calamity and shame.

The next qualification for good citizenship I mention is *a sympathy with the spirit of the government.* There needs a feeling in the heart for one's country, as well as a comprehension of its presiding principles and its informing ideas by the intellect; because a nation, which is only a kind of collective and conscious person, has, in some sort, a heart of its own, as well as a brain,—and so a characteristic temper, or quality, to be loved or hated, to be sympathized with, or repelled

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by. It is on this moral sympathy between citizen and government, that loyalty and patriotism depend, hardly less than on intelligence. You know how loyalty is roused to enthusiasm, how patriotism flames up into an ardent passion, at the sight of a national edifice, fortification, ship, or the sound of national airs or watch-words. There is no intellectual process in these cases,—no deliberate recurrence to ideas,—but a sudden gush of feeling, a throb out of the heart. Hence the mere sentiment of loyalty, half-blind but enthusiastic, has often been found most impetuous and most heroic in those periods of the world, and those states of society when there was little thinking, but an abundance of feeling. Still, any government is weak, which has not this vital sympathy between the spirit of its institutions and the spirit of the citizens.

Now it often happens in a State as it does in a family, that individuals are found in it, who are out of all harmony with its prevailing sentiments. There is mere physical presence,—but a moral discord,—an absence, or alienage, of the heart. The body is native but the soul foreign,—and needing some other naturalization than a formal oath of allegiance or subscription before a magistrate. Wherever there is one or more of such sullen and uncongenial inmates, there is a chill on the intercourse of the household, an iceberg in its sunny climate. And wherever there is such an element of estrangement and distrust in a State, there must be so much hindrance to its prosperity, so much

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material for disorganization in trying times. It reminds us of what De Maistre, by one of his lively paradoxes, calls France, at one period of her history— "A republic without republicans."

In this country we are exposed to two classes where this want of sympathy has a tendency to appear. One is a class of essential anti-republicans, partly monarchists and partly aristocrats, sometimes cast in upon us by accident, and sometimes growing up among us by anomaly. People are found in our democratic society who belong, by natural affinity, under a transatlantic emperor, among ultramontane ecclesiastics, or back in the feudal centuries. They are full of the pride of caste, full of hereditary ambition, coveting exclusive privileges, fond of badges of rank, absolutists in their real notions, and ridiculously contemptuous of their fellows who suffer external disadvantages. Such persons, however democratic their professions, have no more place here than a cardinal's hat has in a Methodist meeting, simply because they are out of all affinity with the inmost life of the land. If they have their way, unrestrained by custom or policy, they yoke the weak and the poor under a vassalage, they pamper their estates and add splendor to their equipage out of the earnings of the laborer, they would toss up their caps for a bold and conceited adventurer with a crown of gems on a brainless head, or they would institute a selfish oligarchy, taking good care to be themselves inside its counsels. A great

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many restraints may keep this class from ever openly acknowledging themselves; but they are none the less out of all hearty fellowship with the true spirit of the country, and are bad citizens.

There is another class, who, instead of being anti-republicans, are ultra-republicans; or rather they are disorganizers and distractionists, and so are as truly anti-republicans as their opposites; for their wild and irresponsible notions are incompatible with any order or law, and so are among the worst enemies a legitimate democracy has to dread. The main desire of this class is a total solving of all restraints on the passions and the individual will. Their first postulate is that every body is as good as any body. The liberty they lust after is liberty to swallow their fill at the first stall,—the liberty of untamed animals.

There grows up among us an excessive and morbid individualism, begetting an arrogant irreverence. It obstructs domestic discipline, going down into the brains of young children, and inflaming in them a prurient eagerness to spurn at parental authority. It runs into destructionist speculations on theories of social order. It caricatures the generous conceptions our national existence grew from. It writes an egotistical, fevered, passionate, foolish literature. It rallies mobs. It perverts democracy into demonism. It longs for no Christian republic, but a wild riot of the lusts in its heated blood. Sometimes it sits in its study and philosophizes unbelief; sometimes it haunts a German

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beer-shop,—sometimes a reckless pulpit; sometimes it simmers in social bogs and fogs; sometimes it sparkles brilliantly on the top of the rocks. Everywhere it is a traitor and a rebel to the country, and because it spoils the Christian citizen, robs the nation of its rights. Construe independence to mean an unlimited license to do as you please, and instead of the just arbitraments of law, with precedents and experience, calm adjustment and sober equity, you retreat, at best, upon the summary instincts of the injured party, and the matches of brutal violence. Paul, of Russia, when a French ambassador incidentally spoke to him of some man of consequence in St. Petersburg, instantly and impatiently replied, "There is no *man of consequence* in this empire, save the man with whom I happen at any moment to be speaking, and so long only as I am speaking to him is he of consequence." Where every man in the nation feels himself of the size of an emperor, that language will be in the bearing if not the mouth of the crowd. And what is impertinence in manners soon becomes insubordination in temper. It is the misfortune of all liberal movements to attract about them malcontents and radicals. Such false alliances try the strength of a government. If it takes up this crude ingredient, wisely regulates it, converts it and assimilates it, it is strong. But if the disordered matter proves too much for the digestive energy of the constitution, and remains discordant, then it poisons the whole health of the body.



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A third qualification for a right citizenship, besides an understanding of the principles of the government and a sympathy with its spirit, is *a practical respect for the operation of its forms.* One might suppose, indeed, that when the two first exist the third must necessarily follow. I think we do find instances, however, where the government is both understood and loved, while its regular and necessary functions are treated with a neglect amounting very nearly to contempt. Because the forms are free, and the acts are voluntary, it does not follow that they are trivial, but the contrary. Among us respect for the government is shown in performing all the primary duties that attend the right of suffrage. Our early fathers certainly enjoy a reputation for dignity quite as high as we can emulate; yet they did not deem it beneath them, whatever their station, to take the most active participation in all the initiatory steps of an election. Those of our citizens who stand aloof from the little local meetings and movements which are the fountains of all democratic power, are actuated by a very false view of their responsibilities, or else by a very foolish pride; and they are handing over the reins of rule or misrule, as fast as they can, into the fingers of jobbers and charlatans. Neither business, nor pleasure, nor unconcern, nor disgust at vulgar proceedings, nor any other cause, ought to deter you from this duty. If it does, the country holds you chargeable for its disgrace, and you are not good citizens.

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III. So we pass up from the citizen to the legislator, which two, by the felicity of our system, meet in the same person—the citizen-legislator.

Nothing belongs more precisely to this occasion, than a fresh conviction of the necessity of a high personal character, in the public makers of law, to the honor and safety of the Commonwealth. Let us not be deceived. There are laws of moral influence and moral life, above those that are voted and recorded, so inwrought into man and his institutions by the Eternal God, that nothing can tear them out without dislocating the joints of the structure, and nobody can break them without being an "architect of ruin." One of these is, that wrong principle, in every workman whose work is moral, creeps over, and subtly spreads itself, to contaminate and damage the thing he works in. Now, the legislator's work is largely moral. It has constantly to do with the everlasting distinction between right and wrong. It professes to guard and foster equity and truth. It is the avowed organ of justice. It is the terror of evil doers, and the praise of them that do well. It touches the most sacred interests of society. Its special and legitimate sphere is rectitude, peace, order, between man and man. It deals with the very first demonstrations of overt integrity and systematic morality, so far as external measures can. Nor are the laws merely an enactment and execution of the moral convictions of a people, as is so often implied: they are an indirect but effectual

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educator of these convictions also,—constantly forming the public conscience, and raising or lowering the tone of moral life. They are not only an expression, but an influence,—not only a sign *of* them but a power *upon* them.

Now, a business so august and so sacred as that cannot be intrusted to any but good men,—righteous men,—sound at heart, right with God, true to humanity,—men that can neither be bought off, nor reasoned off, nor frightened off, nor flattered off, from the simple and immutable right.

The State and the law, persons and property, education and industry, marriage and life, are not safe in the hands of any other order of men. You say, good laws may be made by unprincipled men. So may pious sermons be preached by a Godless clergy. But that does not affect the truth, that down at the secret channels of things, and finally, in the long run, up on the open fields of history, what man *is* works itself into what man *does*—spirit determines life—principles shape institutions. Public virtue does not graft nor grow on personal iniquity. Men do not gather figs of thistles, nor of a bramble-bush grapes, nor of tricky and profane legislators a noble and Christian State.

True, the *form* of the government is by no means a matter of indifference. Here it is not likely to be underrated. Yet personal character will sometimes override even the sharpest distinctions in that, and it

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is certainly a grander element. A Mexican republic can hardly be pronounced better than an English monarchy. Unless we live in some consistency with the pure ideas out of which the Revolution sprang, we shall have gained no more by a change of rulers than Rome gained by the expulsion of the Tarquins. Despotism may be "democratized," but it is still despotism. A people may destroy their tyrants without destroying tyranny; so the Romans did; but they cannot corrupt their law-makers without debilitating their laws.

See, by a little careful notice, how the mischief results, and why a Massachusetts legislator should be practically, as well as nominally, an honest, Christian man. First of all, you, whom the people have chosen to represent them in the government are set, in some measure, to be exponents of public virtue. An authority is committed to you. Each of you in his own town, village, or city, is marked by his election as a man that may be trusted. Responsibility widens with respect. The young look to you for example. The unsteady quote your practice. If you are self-indulgent, mean, coarse, double-tongued, you will harm your neighborhood on a larger scale, you will diffuse corruption with a more fatal facility, and to a heavier judgment, for your office.

Again, a legislator's personal sins disgrace the institutions he tampers with in the eyes of the community, and so they are unpatriotic as well as impious. Reverence for the appointments of law is certainly not

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too common. It declines alarmingly. The generations are not growing up with an excess of loyalty. For this waning veneration toward the dignity of government, the "powers that be," the place, the assemblies, the processes of governmental control, it is for you to consider how far the bearing of official persons is accountable. You say, institutions may be revered whether their managers are noble or vulgar. But it happens that men are influenced by the living representatives and spokesmen of things, quite as much as by the things themselves. Mental association is a fact; and a government is judged by the governors.

Thirdly, moral weakness blunts the intellectual perceptions. Every time a man is false to the highest leading of his soul, he dwarfs his mind. Law-makers want every faculty their Creator gave them, and in something better than the natural condition,—sharpened, stimulated, made solid and strong. Measures come before you that require the mind's nicest touch and boldest stroke,—the keenest discrimination and the firmest grasp,—the quick insight and the patient reason. These are intellectual abilities that go only with habits of truth, temperance, chastity, honesty. The man that drags himself up to his seat after a night of convivial carousing, his brain still foggy and his eyes vacant with the profligacy that has drenched his soul, is no fit servant to stand for the interests of man or the powers ordained of God,—among wise states-

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men or pure patriots,—in the encounters of dignified debate, or the difficulties of entangled times. Clear-sightedness of the head waits in the end on clear-sightedness of the heart. The sentence of retribution against that evil work may not be executed speedily, but it comes at last. The voluptuary will not abrogate the immutable penalty. God is the God of our whole life. Pure waters of pure fountains. Never wisdom out of folly; never right by compromise or collusion with wrong. The cunning and selfish bargainer of the shop and the market, the farmer that cheats in weight or measure, the fradulent mechanic, the lawyer that makes exceptions in heaven's command of truth, for professional lies, the exhorbitant money-lender, the gambling broker,—all these will carry their disordered natures and their mutilated honor with them to the legislature, and there they will barter away rectitude and themselves for fees or votes. Then a carnival of the appetites will supplant the dignities and sterner joys of our beginnings; then we shall be ashamed to recur to our ancestral annals, just as the Roman authorities, of a corrupted age, were afraid to show the populace the old code of Numa, after it had been dragged from its obscurity, lest the palpable inconsistency should rouse indignation into rebellion; then pleasure will become the scandalous substitute for patriotism,—just as enervated Athens, when truth and honor were lost, "dreaded Philip not as the enemy of her liberty but of her luxury,"—or as

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the emasculated subjects of Augustus, angry at his severities, quelled their factions, and were tamely pacified, when he let Pylades, the comedian, come back to make sport for them in the theatre. It will avail nothing that we have built up a splendid prosperity, and that our numbers have increased eight-fold since we were a people and a power. Numbers and property and territory are as effectual to break an overgrown and corrupt policy to pieces as to confirm a sound one; and we shall sink under a law of God framed before Numa meditated, or Philip fought, or Columbus sailed. My friends, you will see the ancient glories of our Commonwealth restored, just as far as you restore the scrupulous conscience and the righteous character—and with them the high-bred manners and commanding thought—of those men who approached the magistrate's trust with awe, as a temple holy to the Lord.

Would to heaven we could only realize this simple and everlasting law of moral life; that the stream cannot rise above the fountain! There is an unsightly spectacle, not unknown in our own legislative annals. In some fitful mood of conscience, of philanthropy, a people, or its representatives, legislate some measure altogether beyond the average and common level of their moral life. What then? How long can such a statute stand? What will be its efficacy while it remains? Statute-book and people both are only disgraced presently by a retreat into their inferior

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morality. Any body that professes, in creed, or in civil decree, above its faith, is guilty of cant, if not of hypocrisy, and its life silently eats out the heart of its written law. We do nothing effectually but what we do from the full head-waters of honest conviction. Bring up the personal sources of goodness, and your acts will put on a consistent grandeur.

The complaint appears to gain emphasis and currency, that both in the National and the State bodies, the course of independent and impartial legislation is seriously obstructed by the use of ambiguous machinery, and by appeals to sordid motives. I do not profess to know the absolute or the relative reason for this complaint. This, however, is certain, and challenges consideration; within a few years past, in our State legislature, the subject-matter of legislation has undergone a remarkable change. There is a vastly increased proportion of private bills—measures that look to the immediate interests of individuals or corporations. At the last regular session, considerably more than half the Acts and Resolves were of this nature. Partly this is inevitable: with the passage of time, the growth of commonwealths, general laws get settled. The same advance calls into being an increased number of special enterprises, seeking the protection, or patronage, of the State. Obviously there comes in, with this tendency, an accumulating temptation to external interference with the opinions, judgments, consciences of senators and representatives.



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This needs no proof. The lobby speaks for itself, and whatever may be said of its tactics, its geography needs no description. Now, let it be granted that gross bribery, that open and direct bids of money, or custom in business, are rare. Granted that in this honorable body of men before me, there is not one that would not spurn such an approach away from him as an atrocious insult to his manhood, and with shame and pity for the depravity capable of proposing it. Much, I say, yet remains behind all that. It remains, I suspect, proverbially and notoriously true, that a bill is by no means secure which is left simply and solely to its merits. It remains proverbially and notoriously true, that not a few measures are no sooner proposed, than a systematic arrangement and plan of attack are made to carry it, without or within, by other appeals than those to the clear judgment, the unbiassed will, the impartial and honest sense of the members. Committees may be packed, weeks before hand; prejudice may be enlisted; base passion—envy, jealousy, avarice—kindled. Make what allowance or qualification you please. If such things happen only once in a session, it is cause for anxiety and alarm. Or, make the case one of pure hypothesis; your notice of the matter will still be profitable.

Remember, then, first, that every possible question, proposition, grant, charter, or measure whatsoever, that can come before you, has in it the elements of right or wrong, justice or injustice, and is to be judged

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by you accordingly, and not by any inferior judgment. Remember that it is as true to-day as in the days of the Hebrew legislator, that "a gift," that is a bribe, "blindeth the wise," and that the capability of being bribed has ever gone with treachery, signalized a decaying state, and been held the sure precursor of anarchy and overthrow. Remember that bribery is none the less bribery for coming, not in the shape of gold or bank notes, but in that of an electioneering lift, or a professional assistance, or a supper party. Surely it must be a strange and intolerable morality that distinguishes whether the price of dishonor is paid into an itching palm, or on to a proud pair of shoulders,—paid to a man's pocket, or his politics, or his palate. Financial, political, professional, convivial, they are all of one debauched and accursed brood.

I know it may be said, many measures are brought forward that seem to have no specific quality of good or evil; it is immaterial whether you vote for or against them; you do not see far enough into them, or trace them out to such consequences, as to make it an imperative duty to favor, or to oppose them, and so you may follow your own interest in doing the one or the other. This seems to be taking refuge from moral responsibility in intellectual stupidity. But it will not serve, in fact, in logic, or in ethics. The truth is, no measure proposed is thus indifferent. Every one, you *ought* to countenance, or you *ought* to oppose. Understood, the bill, however small, will reveal that positive

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character. And to begin to tamper with your power of discrimination, your legislative fidelity, your private manliness, by balancing off your own interest or your pet project with some fellow-member's,—helping your railroad in the western county by supporting his, justified or not, in an eastern one; carrying a bank charter at home by helping out an infirm bridge-corporation for your neighbor; or making an insurance company in the city, or next autumn's canvass, pay the way of a company where you are a stockholder, or your nephew is a director, or your political friend wants to be president,—all this is to pronounce yourself below the level of the moral dignity of your place. These are only the Tempter's plausibilities,—Satan transformed into the angel of mutual accommodation. More than that, it is just as profligate, and just as dishonest, to be hired to run from your seat, when a vote is to be taken, as to be hired to stay there and vote on the wrong side, only in that case you add the meanness of a coward, with the ignominy of a truant and a trimmer, to the guilt of a knave. Gentlemen, whatever else we lose, let us cling to our brave, unspotted ancestral honor. No one measure can possibly be put before you, by governor's message or people's petition, in all this session, so vital, so momentous, so supreme, as that principle. Imagine James Otis and Samuel Adams foisting projects through the forms of law by mutual compensation! Imagine John Adams and Benjamin Lincoln dodging a vote! You must pardon

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the half profane hypothesis. And that you may spare the State a reproachful contrast, take care that the time never come to us, when it can be said, in our capitol, as by an old statesman of another stamp and grade, that he could never obtain the grant of sixpence for a poor and deserving claimant, but that he could always carry a felony without benefit of clergy.

Doubtless it is a deplorable condition of a people if they do not recognize their divinely appointed leaders,—do not know their best men when they see them, and, having the republican privilege, fail to put them at the head of affairs. But it is a sadder sight yet, when those who have been raised to power under the impression that they were the best, noblest, purest, falsify that confidence, betray that trust, and turn the glory and the hope into shame. That happens when men imagine they can neglect the law of a heavenly estate, because they are chosen to enact laws for an earthly. That happens, if they dream that they can lay off their principles when they take up an office, or because they begin to be legislators cease to be men. That happens, when they forget that from the moment they enter the halls they become the unpurchasable servants of the least and lowest of the people of the State, and can take no other furtherance to their private fortunes but their lawful salary. That happens, when they come to the capital of the State to practice in secret, out of sight of their families, the vices that

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always corrupt commonwealths, and then go back to their constituents unclean and guilty. That happens when they postpone the integrity of the soul to political Shiboleths, making it a test where a man was born rather than what he is, or else subordinating the mighty virtues of humanity to the cabals and caucuses of a party. Above all, do not be enticed into any measure, direct or indirect, which can possibly be construed into connivance at the overshadowing American crime—the enslaving or re-enslaving of man.

I go back just a century in the history of Massachusetts. It is striking to see how the sins of one age are the sins of another, because the same old human heart remains. There is no extinct species in the *Flora* of iniquity. A hundred years ago the 25th of last May, before the election day was changed, and when the first duty of the Colonial Legislature was to elect the councilmen, the minister of the New Brick Church, in Boston,* preached the anniversary sermon. Calling on the magistrates before him to "arise and teach the people," to "fear God and keep his commandments," that it might be well with them and their children forever, he continued his faithful exhortation thus: "Animated by this divine principle, we trust you will proceed this day to the choice of His Majesty's Council, and give your votes for men who have an awful regard for the laws of God. You will choose men of wisdom

* Ebenezer Pemberton.

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to discern the times,—more zealous to advance the public welfare than their private advantage,—men who will hazard their credit and estates rather than unite in any schemes of oppression and injustice,—men who will venture to displease the highest authority upon earth, rather than give a vote for a person unqualified for the office to which he is nominated,—men that will not sell their country for a bribe, but will generously neglect their private affairs when the public requires their attention,—men that will recommend religion not only by wholesome laws but by their instructive example."

This immaculate, invincible uprightness in public station is no dream of visionaries. We cannot dismiss it as a glory of the Past, impracticable and fabulous at present. That is infidelity to Providence, to history, to the ever-living heart of Christ. Besides, the instances stand forth, illustrious and imperial, in every Christian nation,—the honor of statesmanship, the defence of governments, the strength of their age against all partisan or selfish conspiracies. Look, for a single example of that power, into the last generation and the legislative halls of England. Trained in the best refinement and learning of his time, coming forth from the midst of London fashions and palaces, where the frowns of the world are most formidable and its flatteries most seductive, familiar from his childhood with the luxuries of fortune and the policies of a false expediency, yet with his vision quickened by Christian

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heritage, we forfeit that Future, only as we disobey God, injure man, and worship ourselves.

To the retiring chief magistrate I offer the respectful salutations of the place and the hour, congratulating him on the honors of his office, on the successes of its administration, on the release from its cares, on every independent and unselfish act in its discharge, on every inward or outward testimony of fidelity.

For the honorable Senate, Council, and House of Representatives, I invoke here the spirit and blessing of the God of our fathers, the God of our beloved Commonwealth, the God of Honor, Justice, Truth and Peace. May they be honest legislators, Christian citizens, lovers of the nation, servants of Christ and his Church!

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